



Hope & Homes for Children



Save the Children



SOS DJEČIJA
SELA
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World Vision

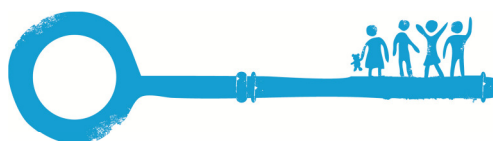
Written contribution to the IPA II Country Strategy Paper for Bosnia and Herzegovina

This contribution is jointly submitted by six organisations which are partners in implementing a pan-European campaign “**Opening Doors for Europe’s Children**” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including: Hope and Homes for Children, Save the Children, SOS Children’s Villages Bosnia and Herzegovina, SUMERO Union for persons with intellectual difficulties in FBiH, UNICEF, and World Vision.

We welcome The Draft Country Strategy Paper for IPA II in Bosnia and Herzegovina and particularly the identification of the protection of fundamental rights (including rights of disabled, Roma, children) and education, employment and social services as areas for assistance. The proposed IPA II strategy for education, employment and social policies includes objectives for the reform of social services and social benefits and for the promotion of inclusion. **Deinstitutionalisation** is a pre-requisite for full inclusion which is why it is important for the Strategy to include it as **an explicit priority**. This is also a key component of the process of social service reform which is already advocated therein.

The EU is currently faced with a **historic opportunity** to demonstrate its steadfast support for the transition from institutional to family-based care for children and adults across EU member states and countries in the process of accession. A breakthrough has already been achieved in the Regulations on the Use of European Structural Funds for the next seven years, which for the first time include specific references to support the “**transition from institutional to community-based care**”, and with the adoption of the 2013 Recommendation “Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage”, which also calls for a stop to the expansion of institutional care settings for children without parental care, and calls for the promotion of quality, community-based care and foster care within family settings instead, where children’s voice is given due consideration.

We hereby emphasise our firm belief that the Union’s political and financial support for child welfare reforms must also benefit children in the wider European region, and in particular in the countries which aspire to EU membership. These issues lay at the core of the campaign “**Opening Doors for Europe’s Children**” which runs across 12 European countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.



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Deinstitutionalisation in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is on-going and there is evidence of good practice¹ but progress has been slow. Entities have put in place relevant policies and strategies that promote family-based forms of care and transformation of the institutional care system but due to limited financial resources and lack of expertise the process is still mainly driven by international organisations and their local non-governmental partners.

In its own assessment of child rights in BiH², the EU has repeatedly stressed that whilst the use of foster care for children has slightly increased, institutionalisation remains the primary response to the needs of children without parental care.

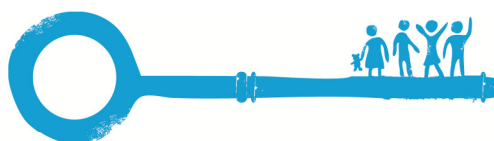
With the ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** in 2010, the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina have the obligation to take a firm stance on the promotion of rights of children and adults with disabilities, who are among the most likely victims of institutional care, and to support the introduction of a new social empowerment model – thus implementing article 19 of the Convention which recognizes the right to live independently and being included in the community. This obligation extends to the Union's relations with third countries, including pre-accession and neighbourhood, which is why we call for the EU's support in this area.

Reform of the social sector through deinstitutionalisation of social protection is indispensable for the social and economic recovery of the country. Social inclusion of vulnerable groups is referenced in several instances in the Country Strategy Paper for Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the main drivers of progress. Among funding priorities for BiH special onus is placed on "further support (that) will target the development of care services to support the social inclusion of persons at risk, with a focus on the needs of the target group (e.g. children, Roma, disabled, unemployed)".

In view of all of the above, we call upon the EU to prioritize de-institutionalisation of social and child protection in the national strategic document for IPA II in Bosnia and Herzegovina by introducing an explicit reference to transition from institutional to family-based care for children deprived of parental care and children and adults with disabilities, mirroring the same priority that has been identified in the recently adopted Structural Funds

¹ Institution for children without parental care „Most“ in Zenica was closed down in 2007, and there are two ongoing projects of transformation of the institutions for children without parental care in Tuzla and in Mostar.

² Recommendations of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights 2008; EU Country Progress Report 2013.



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SUMERO pozitivno o intelektualnim teškoćama
SAVEZ ORGANIZACIJA ZA PODRŠKU OSOBAMA S INTELIGENTNIM TEŠKOĆAMA FBiH

unicef



Regulations³, thus ensuring coherence in policy objectives and funding in the entire region.

The importance of **coherence of messages** sent out by the EU cannot be underestimated. We appeal to the European Union to systematically evaluate the progress made towards full respect of children's rights and in particular the most vulnerable groups, including children deprived of parental care, children and adults with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities.

We urge the EU to capitalise on the **significant track record** of supporting child protection reforms in the context of previous enlargement processes (2004 and 2007). The Union's steady political pressure, financial support and transfer of know-how towards the then candidate countries were paramount to addressing the social emergency caused by institutionalisation of children.

The lessons learnt yesterday must apply today.

For more information on this issue or the campaign please contact the national campaign coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

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³ Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund.



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